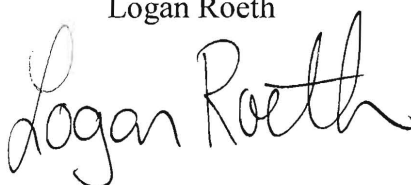


A Case Study on the Branding of *Harry Potter*

An Honors Thesis (HONR 499)

By

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Logan Roeth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looped "L" and a trailing flourish.

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to identify the underlying symbolic process of the marketing and branding behind the *Harry Potter* series and to analyze how it functioned to affect consumers amidst the whirlwind of the “Pottermania” that existed for over a decade. The *Harry Potter* series has broken countless industry records and has taught us some of the most valuable marketing lessons of recent history. A perfect storm of factors served as an ideal platform for the brand’s success at its inception. Despite this desirable platform, I have found that it was in fact J.K. Rowling, her loyalty to the fans, and her decisions that ultimately guided and pushed the brand to the full-fledged phenomenon it now stands. To this day, Rowling and her marketing team are ever evolving and adapting to the digital age to fulfill consumer needs and continue to give *Harry Potter* fans what they want. The *Harry Potter* brand and J.K. Rowling as brand guardian serve as highly valuable examples of marketing and adaptation in our current and future media industry.

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Table of Contents

Introduction 3

 Section 1: The Perfect Storm for Success 4

 Table 1: Early *Harry Potter* Timeline 8

 Section 2: The Rowling Effect 12

 Section 3: Pottermania 19

 Table 2: *Harry Potter* Franchise Sales 20

 Table 3: First Run Copies Printed 22

 Table 4: *Harry Potter* Release Dates Timeline 24

 Section 4: The Digital World of Harry Potter 28

 Table 5: First Two Weeks of *Pottermore* Statistics 32

Conclusion 34

Works Cited 37

Introduction

"We do not need magic to transform our world. We carry all the power we need inside ourselves already. We have the power to imagine better."

-J.K. Rowling

What is it that makes a specific brand valuable? Why are consumers emotionally connected and loyal to some brands more than others? The way we feel about a brand is significantly affected by the way that brand is presented to us. Our human experience today is submerged in an ultra-mediated society. We have been so constantly surrounded by various messages and brands all of our lives that we do not even realize how strongly and deeply connected we are with the media around us. We live in this society similar to how a fish lives in water, surrounded and yet somehow unaware of those surroundings at the same time. Our ability to recognize a brand and the connections our brains associate with them all occurs subconsciously and yet we as consumers play the most vital role in their existence. As consumers, we see the media's messages, we desire, we buy, and we demand.

The average American today is undoubtedly exposed to far more advertisements and brands than previous generations. Some of this branding that we are exposed to may be as simple as a logo for a coffee shop or a jingle for a law firm. However, branding can be as all-encompassing and complex as an entire collection of designs, icons, stories, and terms. Some brands are more recognizable and some have more of an emotional appeal than others like Coca-Cola or McDonalds. Specific brands among the entertainment industry have these same levels of notoriety as well. An entertainment brand occurs when the content is inherently entertainment and it is distributed as such, but that content is also a part of and it is advertised as a larger brand such as *Star Wars* or Disney. What is it that sets a single entertainment brand apart from the masses of stories in the industry? What makes one story more successful and how does it create

such emotional connections with its fans? Is it the quality of the entertainment content that is so appealing to consumers or is it the way in which that content is branded and advertised?

One of the most recognizable entertainment brands of our generation has been the *Harry Potter* series of books, films, games, and other various content. In the past twenty years, this series has gone from a simple idea in the mind of an impoverished single mother living in England to a full-fledged cultural phenomenon worth billions of dollars. The brand of *Harry Potter* is not just a series of books but it encompasses an entire group of content that is all advertised and communicated through the carefully constructed and maintained brand of *Harry Potter*. I have found that there are many reasons for this brand's success over the years, but that J.K. Rowling and her self-appointed role as a strict brand guardian have allowed the *Harry Potter* brand to maintain its breadth and relevance in the industry over the past two decades and into the future.

The Perfect Storm for Success

"I was set free because my greatest fear had been realized, and I still had a daughter who I adored, and I had an old typewriter and a big idea. And so rock bottom became a solid foundation on which I rebuilt my life."

-JK Rowling

The young and orphaned boy wizard that would come to be Harry Potter first entered the mind of Joanne "Jo" Rowling as she was stuck on a delayed train between Manchester and London in the year 1990. Little did she know, a perfect storm of factors were slowly beginning to brew that would come to serve as the platform for young Harry's wide success. The most essential and yet also the most basic of these factors was the inherent excellence of that story she would go on to create. Marketing expert Susan Gunelius has stated that, "The longevity and

breadth of product appeal is essentially contingent on how good a product is”.¹ The *Harry Potter* books are an innately superior product and were therefore easy to sell and to maintain relevance in the market. Another factor for the ultimate success of the books was the emotional appeal that helplessly tied each and every fan to the story, the world, and the characters Rowling created. Nothing is stronger than an emotional connection when it comes to bringing consumers back again and again.

The series was also easily sold to almost any demographic because there is something in the *Harry Potter* series that nearly every man and woman of any age can relate to and make a connection with. Rowling has stated that she believes the books are such a crossover hit because she never wrote them with a target audience in mind.² Instead of writing them for a specific age group or type of child, Rowling wrote the books to stay true to the story and its characters. Another reason readers felt so connected to the story is because the level of complexity and reading level increases along with the aging of the characters from book to book. The first book, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, is only 223 pages long and was clearly written at a lower reading level than that of the much more complex 607 page finale, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*. The series essentially “grows up” alongside its characters and its readers, creating an even deeper emotional connection and more intimate experience for the reader.

One of the most important factors for the series' success, however, was the concept of a seven-book-long overarching plot, which focuses on the same group of characters. This type of linear plot generates an organic and compelling cliffhanger effect to the series that left fans always drooling for more. By inviting readers to follow the plot through to the end to learn the

¹ Gunelius, Susan. *Harry Potter: The Story of a Global Business Phenomenon*. Basingstoke, England: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. Print. 157.

² Gleick, Elizabeth. "The Wizard of Hogwarts." *Time*. 12 Apr. 1999. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0%2C9171%2C990705%2C00.html>>.

fate of the characters with whom they had become emotionally involved, Rowling was effectively ensuring their loyal readership until the very end of the series. There are details in the very first *Harry Potter* book that are related to significant details in the seventh. In fact, Rowling stated very early on that she had a master plan for the series' plot and that she had even written the last sentence of the series before the first book was even published. Knowing the author had a plan for these characters all along really made readers "feel comfortable knowing the brand [would] be around for a predetermined amount of time, and they [were] willing to go along for the ride".³ This type of plot differed from other popular children's series that were being published at the same time such as R.L. Stine's *Goosebumps* series. Each *Goosebumps* book had an individual plot and no connection from one book to another. While Stine was able to publish sixty-two books for the series, he achieved nowhere near the emotional connection and publicity that Rowling was able to garner with her overarching plot.

The quality of the books undoubtedly aided the series' success but Rowling's remarkable and emotional story as an impoverished single mother acquired a significant amount of news coverage that pushed the series into a light it may not have otherwise seen. Rowling graduated from the University of Exeter on the south coast of England in 1986 with a BA in French and the Classics and went on to work at Amnesty International in London. While stuck on a train between London and Manchester in 1990, Rowling's most life changing idea swept through her head. On her website, Rowling recalls, "I had been writing almost continuously since the age of six but I had never been so excited about an idea before".⁴ Unable to find a pen, Rowling simply sat on that four hour train ride and began to imagine the world that would one day become the

³ Gunelius, 20

⁴ *JK Rowling Website*. 2012. TM and JK Rowling. 16 November 2012. <<http://www.jkrowling.com>>.

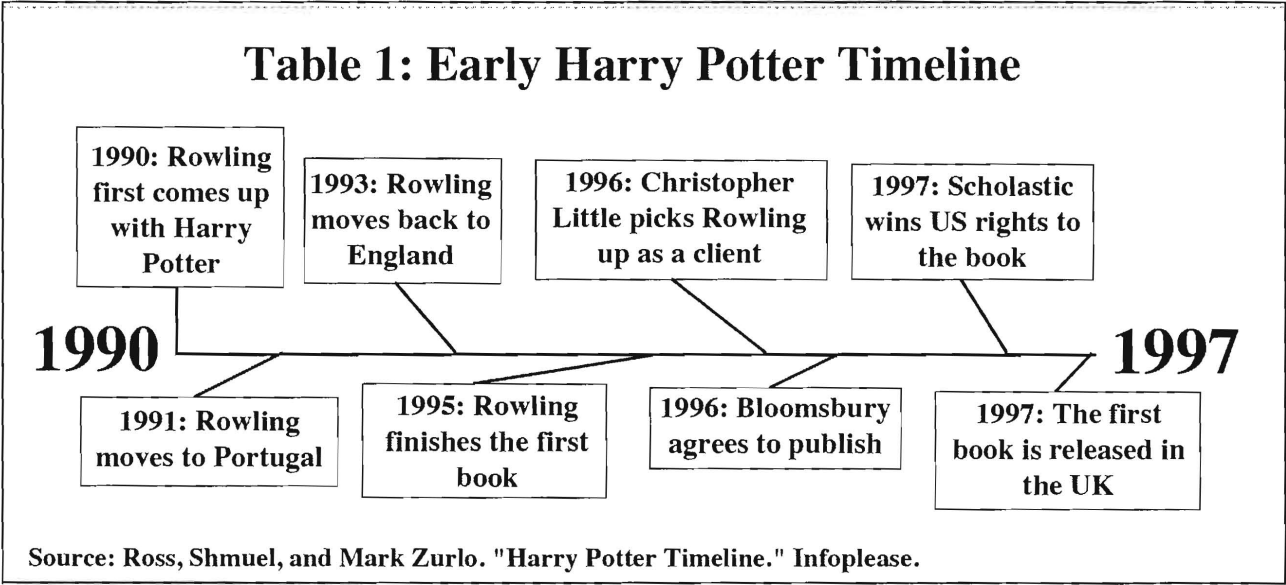
wizarding world that *Harry Potter* fans know so well. That very night, she began writing *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*, the first book of the series. One year later, after a divorce and the tragic death of her mother, Rowling took her growing manuscript along with her to Portugal to teach English. While she was in Portugal, Rowling had a brief marriage and gave birth to her first daughter, Jessica. After spending two years there, Rowling returned to England in 1993 with her young daughter.

It was during this time, living in Edinburgh, trying to take care of a young child, and tirelessly working to finish the manuscript of *The Philosopher's Stone*, that Jo describes as her “rock bottom”.⁵ Living below the poverty line and after many failed attempts to find an agent, Rowling finally caught a break in 1996 when Christopher Little's small London agency decided to take her on as a client. It took over a year for Little to find a publisher to take a chance on Rowling's book. Publishers had many reservations about *Harry Potter* at first. There was very little money to be made in youth literature at the time and Rowling's manuscript was much longer and much more complex than the average children's book. Furthermore, her book was full of British culture such as the concept of boarding schools that publishers were sure would not sell to foreign audiences. The book also had very dark themes of death and evil. Publishers saw all of these factors as daunting obstacles to overcome and as such were not worth the little pay they assumed they would make from the book.

Christopher Little had a very difficult time finding a publisher to even take the time to look at Rowling's manuscript. He was unsuccessful in securing a publishing deal until Barry Cunningham of Bloomsbury gave the first chapter to his young daughter to read. The two greatly enjoyed “the themes of friendship; support; and the fact that children, working together, were

⁵ JK Rowling Website

able to overcome so many challenges”.⁶ Therefore, as shown in Table 1, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher’s Stone* was published in the United Kingdom in June 1997 by Bloomsbury Children’s books. But even then Cunningham advised Rowling to adopt a pen name and drop the first name Joanne to disguise her gender because some young males might have been wary of a book written by a woman. Cunningham also advised her to “get a day job, because there is a very little chance of making money in children’s books”.⁷ However, Rowling quit that day job that same year when the book began not only selling in the United Kingdom, but also garnering attention overseas.



After receiving some interest from a number of American publishers, Little organized an auction for the American publishing rights of the series at the 1997 Bologna Book Fair in Italy. One young publisher named Arthur Levine was exceptionally excited about the auction. Arthur A. Levine Books was a newly founded imprint of the Scholastic Corporation which specialized in books for young readers. Levine had not yet made many successes with his young imprint but

⁶ JK Rowling Website

⁷ JK Rowling Website

was adamant about getting his hands on Rowling's series about the boy wizard. While many publishers at the time were turned off by Rowling's lengthy manuscript riddled with dark themes of death and harsh realities, Levine praised her for her ability "to tell a story that breaks your heart".⁸ Levine believed that something very powerful happens when literature is able to emulate the heartbreak of real life. He offered Rowling a record breaking \$100,000 advance for a foreign children's book, winning the auction in Bologna.

Levine knew from the very first time he read the manuscript on the plane home that the series would be very successful. As was common with new books, he began to send the manuscript out to various American news outlets and reviewers for publicity. However, Levine's levels of enthusiasm for this new book were not common at all. In a letter to Margot Adler, a correspondent for NPR, he stated, "I predict you'll face a quandary: whether to share this with a friend, or to keep it for yourself, knowing how much this Reader's Edition of J.K. Rowling's first book will be worth in years to come".⁹ At a time when very few people believed in Rowling's young series, Levine was close to predicting its future phenomenon status. While the idea of the series was daunting and unrealistic to publishers at first, the quality of the actual text quickly changed people's minds. After reading the book, those such as Arthur Levine, Christopher Little, and Barry Cunningham could not help but believe in the magic of the story and how successful the series would become.

Rowling recalls the deal with Scholastic as a turning point in her life. In a 1997 interview with a London newspaper she stated,

⁸ Levine, Arthur. "PotterCast #22, 23, & 24." Interview by Melissa Anelli. *Pottercast: The Harry Potter Podcast*. The Leaky Cauldron, Jan.-Feb. 2006. Web. 11 June 2012. <<http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/pottercast/?p=259>>, <<http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/pottercast/?p=270>>, <<http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/pottercast/?p=279>>.

⁹ Anelli, Melissa. *Harry, a History: The True Story of a Boy Wizard, His Fans, and Life inside the Harry Potter Phenomenon*. New York: Pocket, 2008. Print. 60.

*When the American deal came through, that meant security. It means that I can buy a flat. It means not worrying. The constant mind-blowing worry of wondering if you are going to be able to last the week without buying another pack of nappies. That is how it was and it is a horrible, horrible way to live.*¹⁰

The news of a young writer from Edinburgh receiving a record breaking \$100,000 advance from a huge American publisher suddenly became what everyone wanted to talk about. Rowling participated in numerous interviews with various Edinburgh, Glasgow, and London newspapers in the weeks following the rights auction. These papers attracted much sympathy for the author with headlines such as “\$100,000 Success Story for Penniless Mother” and “Coffee in One Hand, Baby in Another- A Recipe for Success”.¹¹ The articles briefly told of her inspirational rags to riches tale and praised the quality of her growing young series. After the Scholastic publication of the first two books, Rowling began showing up in American papers, magazines, and talk shows as well as British publications. This type of publicity certainly aided the book sales, the word of mouth buzz, and the general attention acquired for the series. But what set this series apart from other entertainment brands of the past was that the word of mouth buzz did not only take place in grocery stores and school playgrounds, but it was increasingly taking place on the World Wide Web.

Bloomsbury and Scholastic began publishing the first *Harry Potter* books during a period of time that the general public was really beginning to understand and utilize the Internet as a social communication experience. The growth of the Internet at this specific time is a very significant factor in the *Harry Potter* brand’s story because the web has played a major role in its

¹⁰ Treneman, Ann. "Joanne Rowling's Secret Is Out." *The Independent* [London] 21 Nov. 1997. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1997/1197-independent-treneman.html>>.

¹¹ *Accio Quote!, the Largest Archive of J.K. Rowling Quotes on the Web*. Web. 28 July 2012. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/>>.

marketing and word of mouth buzz. A 1998 AT&T research report on the “Size and Growth Rate of the Internet” states that “The number of Internet users [was] variously given as increasing at 20 or 50 percent per year, and the traffic on the Internet [was] sometimes reported as doubling every three months”.¹² Therefore during the same year that the first *Harry Potter* book was published in the United States, the number of Internet users and the amount of time those users spent on the Internet was drastically increasing. The way people were using the Internet was also changing. “People were learning to use the Internet not just for transactions and email communications; they were beginning to use it as a portal for sharing thoughts and opinions”.¹³ These early years of heavy Internet use spawned various new personal websites, blogs, and user groups such as LiveJournal that enabled people to connect and share ideas online. Early *Harry Potter* fans used the Internet to share and discuss their thoughts about the books and advocate the series. The rise of the Internet created an entire new breed of fan cultures online that past brands never experienced and that exploded the viral word of mouth buzz for a number of entertainment brands at the time such as *Harry Potter*.

Christopher Little revealed in a 1999 interview that he had never seen anything spread so quickly as the appeal of *Harry Potter*. He stated that, “The works of Tolkien and C.S. Lewis might be comparable in tone but their success was built over many years. The word of mouth on *Harry* has been like lightning round a playground.”¹⁴ The utilization of the Internet by both *Harry Potter* fans and its marketers opened up an entirely new world of marketing that drastically helped the spread, appeal, and success of the series. The quality of the books

¹² Coffman, K. G., and A. M. Odlyzko. *The Size and Growth Rate of the Internet*. Rep. AT&T Labs - Research, 2 Oct. 1998. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.dtc.umn.edu/~odlyzko/doc/internet.size.pdf>>. 1.

¹³ Gunelius, 97

¹⁴ McGinty, Stephen. "Pottermania - Focus - Profile - J.K. Rowling." *The Sunday Times*[London] 17 Oct. 1999. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/1999/1099-sundaytimes-mcginty.html>>.

themselves, the interesting story of their author, and the rise of the Internet all provided an ideal platform for the series to take off. But these initial factors are not the only reasons for the series' lasting success. It was ultimately J.K. Rowling, her decisions, and her loyalty to guarding her brand that pushed the series to the levels of notoriety it holds today and stands to maintain into the future.

The Rowling Effect

"I'm not writing for the money. I could really do without the fame. The only point is to satisfy myself now and out of loyalty to the fans."

-JK Rowling

It is clear from her very first interactions with the press that J.K. Rowling is a private person and cared very little about the fame she received over the years. When she sold the rights of her first book to an American publisher, she was mostly excited that she would no longer have to live in poverty. As the books began to sell worldwide, she was mostly happy that she could share her story with so many fans. Rowling had no idea how popular the books would become and she had an even smaller understanding of the mass fan culture that was quickly forming. It was not until after what is known as the "Potterwar" between online fans and Warner Brothers that those working behind the *Harry Potter* brand really began to understand the importance and the complexities of the creator/fan relationship.

During a time when the concept of fan sites and discussing copyrighted material online was very new, Warner Brothers began sending cease and desist letters to many young *Potter* fans who were running various fan sites on the Internet under domain names relating to the *Harry Potter* brand. Many entertainment brands at the time were struggling with these same issues such

as *Star Wars* with Paramount and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* with FOX.¹⁵ With their cease and desist letters, Warner Brothers was attempting to maintain control of its brand in a confusing era of intellectual property online. However, these letters were filled with intimidating and threatening legal jargon that confused and scared the recipients, some as young as thirteen. This poor treatment of its fans by Warner Brothers quickly angered many people around the world. One father of a young fan who received one of these letters sent back, "I don't know what sort of world you live in, but can you imagine how the parents of such a child feel to receive a threat of legal actions, which if they chose to defend could ruin them, all over a fan site born out of enthusiasm of a child?"¹⁶ Many members of the *Harry Potter* fan community online quickly joined together to fight and even organized a worldwide boycott of *Harry Potter* merchandise owned by Warner Brothers.

Eventually, these types of responses forced Warner Brothers to rethink their policy on intellectual property online and even how they treated fans in general. One fan recalls in the documentary *We Are Wizards* that "They pulled back, they reassessed what they were doing, they began to publicly acknowledge they had made mistakes, and they began to change how they related to the fan community".¹⁷ At this point, Warner Brothers began to re-imagine the relationship between *Harry Potter* fans and the *Harry Potter* brand. This "Potterwar" is one of the only instances of poor interaction between *Harry Potter* fans and creator. Instead of allowing this one instance to taint the creator/fan relationship in the future, Warner Brothers and J.K. Rowling herself chose to place an enormous amount of importance on loyalty to the fans from that point on.

¹⁵ Weise, Elizabeth. "'Potter' Is Still the Muggles' Domain." *USA Today*. 24 Apr. 2001. Web. 28 Dec. 2012. <<http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/tech/columnist/cceli000.htm>>.

¹⁶ Weise

¹⁷ *We Are Wizards*. Dir. Josh Koury. 2008. DVD. 0:33:00.

Once the series hit worldwide success, Rowling and the rest of the *Harry Potter* team realized that the most important thing in this series' continued success was to always keep the fans satisfied. I have found that the *Harry Potter* brand stands out in the industry for its strict loyalty to the fans. After the "Potterwar" fiasco, Warner Brothers and the rest of the team behind *Harry Potter* have become much more relaxed about what their fans do online. By allowing fans to embrace the *Harry Potter* brand and personalize it online, not only would fans' emotional involvement and loyalty to the brand grow, but also word of mouth marketing for the brand would spread around the world with no investment from the people behind the brand. In the matter of a few years, the people behind *Harry Potter* went from threatening their fans online to giving the webmasters of influential fan sites sneak peeks at the film sets and other secret information. The marketers were essentially embracing the free marketing these fan sites were happily providing and effectively harnessing the *Harry Potter* fan community online to fan and creator advantage alike.

Once Rowling began to discover and understand what her fans were doing online, she immediately became very supportive of them. She even began giving Fan Site Awards for her favorite sites. By this point there were thousands of these fan sites and groups devoted to discussing plots and even generating and sharing fan fiction and fan art online. Some authors strictly prohibit the use of their characters and plots in fan generated fiction, but Rowling's loyalty to her fans influenced her to take a different stance on the issue. While she did not love the idea of fan fiction, which she compared to "someone going into her house and rearranging her furniture", she also did not want to "interfere with her fan base's expression of love of the

series”.¹⁸ She set up some fair guidelines but she generally encouraged fan fiction. Rowling’s reaction to fan fiction is only one example of the positive creator/fan relationship she advocates.

Noting that her fans enjoyed communicating online, she even created her own website for connecting with fans in 2004. Melissa Anelli states in her book *Harry, A History* that, “The impressive Flash site was designed to look like her real-life desk, littered with hidden puzzles, concealing prizes like first drafts of chapters and hand-drawings of characters”.¹⁹ Rowling knew that she had a vast fan base on the Internet and even though she did not fully understand it, she wanted to participate in it to make her fans happy. All of the content and new information that was released on the site was written by Rowling herself, which really made fans feel connected to the creator. By adding to the conversation online, she was not only validating the online community but she was also further feeding the online buzz and gaining an immense insight into what fans wanted and needed from the brand all at the same time. Rowling was slowly beginning to create the positive and mutually respectful creator/fan relationship that she continues to maintain to this day and which gives the brand an even further sense of authenticity and quality.

There are countless examples of Rowling’s efforts to stay loyal to her fans and to bring them joy with her series. By the time she had written the fourth book, she only allowed a handful of people at Bloomsbury and Scholastic to look at the text before its release so that no child’s enjoyment of the book would be spoiled by any advance word about the plot. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Rosamund de la Hey, head of children's books sales and marketing at Bloomsbury, spoke about Rowling’s dedication to secrecy and how deeply concerned she is

¹⁸ Anelli, 212

¹⁹ Anelli, 240

about protecting the fans.²⁰ Even after making billions of dollars and selling millions of copies of books, her main concern was always what was in the best interest of the people who read and enjoyed them. In a 1999 appearance on *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*, Rowling told a story of a young fan who mispronounced the character of Hermione's name in a conversation with the author. When Rosie asked if she corrected the young boy, Rowling responded, "If he wants to call her Hermy-one, who am I to stop him?"²¹ Even though she is the creator of this series, she still felt that it was not her place to tell this fan how to experience it. She cares so much for her fans that she wants them to experience the brand in whichever way brings them the most joy.

Rowling has also been known to do some outrageously kind deeds for some of her fans. Natalie McDonald, a nine-year-old *Harry Potter* fan from Toronto was struggling with Leukemia when a family friend sent a letter to Rowling's publishers in London asking if she would write back to Natalie. The letter arrived at Rowling's house in Edinburgh one day after she and her family had left for a vacation. When Rowling and her family returned home, she immediately wrote back to Natalie. Unfortunately, Rowling's email arrived one day after Natalie had passed away. When interviewed about the event, Natalie's family friend stated that,

Jo's email was beautiful. She didn't patronize Natalie, or tell her everything was

OK; she addressed her as a human being who was going through a hard time. She

*talked about her books and her characters and which ones she liked best.*²²

²⁰ Cowell, Alan. "Publishers Use Secrecy in Harry Potter Promotion." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 22 May 2000. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2000/05/22/business/publishers-use-secrecy-in-harry-potter-promotion.html?pagewanted=all>>.

²¹ Rowling, J. K. "Rosie and JK Rowling". Interview by Rosie O'Donnell. *The Rosie O'Donnell Show*. NBC. 13 October 1999. Television. YouTube: 24 Jan. 2007. Web. 11 June 2012. <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKQpCNIyLmE>>. 0:06:10.

²² Bethune, Brian. "The Rowling Connection: How a Young Toronto Girl's Story Touched an Author's Heart." *Maclean's*. 6 Nov. 2000. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2000/1100-macleans-bethune.html>>.

Rowling freely shared the secrets of her fourth novel with Natalie, including details journalists and fans desperately sought after for another eleven months. She even included the name “Natalie McDonald” as a first-year student in the fourth book, making Natalie the first character in the series to be named after a real person.

This same type of loyalty to her fans is also the reason for her strict preservation of the brand’s integrity as it became more and more well-known and profitable over the years. Discussions of movie deals began even after the first book’s release. Rowling could have sold out very early on but she instead chose to be very stringent about who would get the rights to the *Harry Potter* film series. She had very strict demands about the film adaptations and initially turned down offers from a series of studios and directors to make the films. Most famously, Rowling even turned down a deal with Steven Spielberg because this film was her vision and she felt “he would have been hampered by not giving his imagination free reign”.²³ Rowling’s role as such a strict brand guardian prevented the *Harry Potter* film series from some potentially disastrous fates such as turning into an animation or an American playing Harry Potter. Without being so stern about her demands, the film series may not have been as successful. Ultimately, she accepted Warner Brothers involvement in the films because they were the most willing to keep the films as true to the books as possible, even though they were not the highest offer.

In a 2000 interview with Stephen Fry, Rowling revealed that she was initially very concerned that the films would become too “Americanized” with an American studio and an American director, but that she was “in there fighting for the integrity of the world constantly”.²⁴

²³ Cowell, Alan. "All Aboard the Potter Express." *New York Times*. 10 July 2000. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2000/0700-nyt-cowell.htm>>.

²⁴ Rowling, J. K. "Launch Day Interview aboard the Hogwarts Express." Interview by Stephen K. Fry. Bloomsbury Press, 8 July 2000. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.accio-quote.org/articles/2000/0700-bloomsbury-fry.html#part7>>.

She played a significant role in the films' conceptions by giving advice on casting to scriptwriting to set design. Rowling also publically announced her approval of the films as they were released, which validated them for millions of fans. The author could have simply sold the film rights to the highest bidder, collected her check, and let the studio take over. Instead, Rowling was very careful about whom she sold the film rights to and she was constantly ensuring the films would stay loyal to the books. Fans deeply respected Rowling's emphasis on the brand's integrity and therefore felt more connected to the films when they were released because they had received the creator's stamp of approval.

Rowling's loyalty was further tested when corporations began offering various merchandising deals, especially when the films started coming out. Rowling has very clearly advocated brand image and message over profit since the very beginning of *Harry Potter*, and she therefore made for a very difficult client when it came to these deals. Merchandising can be very tempting for a brand as it acts both as a form of advertising and as a potentially very lucrative revenue stream. However, many brands fall victim to over merchandising which results in the over saturation of products and that brand can become diluted to the public.²⁵ Fortunately, the *Harry Potter* brand never came close to this fate of over saturation due to Rowling's extremely strict limits on brand extensions and merchandising. For example, fast-food tie-ins can be one of the most lucrative marketing tools for movies, especially those for children; but Rowling refused to allow *Harry Potter* to appear on a McDonald's Happy Meal.

Rowling made many bold and protective decisions such as these in order to protect her brand. In turn, the amount of *Harry Potter* merchandise in the marketplace was much smaller than other entertainment brands. This limited amount of merchandise may have played a vital

²⁵ Gunelius, 86

role in the series' success because "extreme emotional connection and loyalty to a brand can wane when consumers have had their fill of that brand".²⁶ Consumers of an entertainment brand such as *Harry Potter* have to feel that that brand is somewhat "their own" for it to still be appealing; and seeing the characters on a Coke bottle or a fast food bag somehow ruins that concept. One cannot help but imagine how much money could have been generated if Rowling had not turned down so many merchandising deals. However, the fact that she *did* turn them down could perhaps be a very important reason for the brand's lasting appeal. Fans are given just enough content that keeps them happy and talking about it, and yet also leaves them always wanting more.

Pottermania

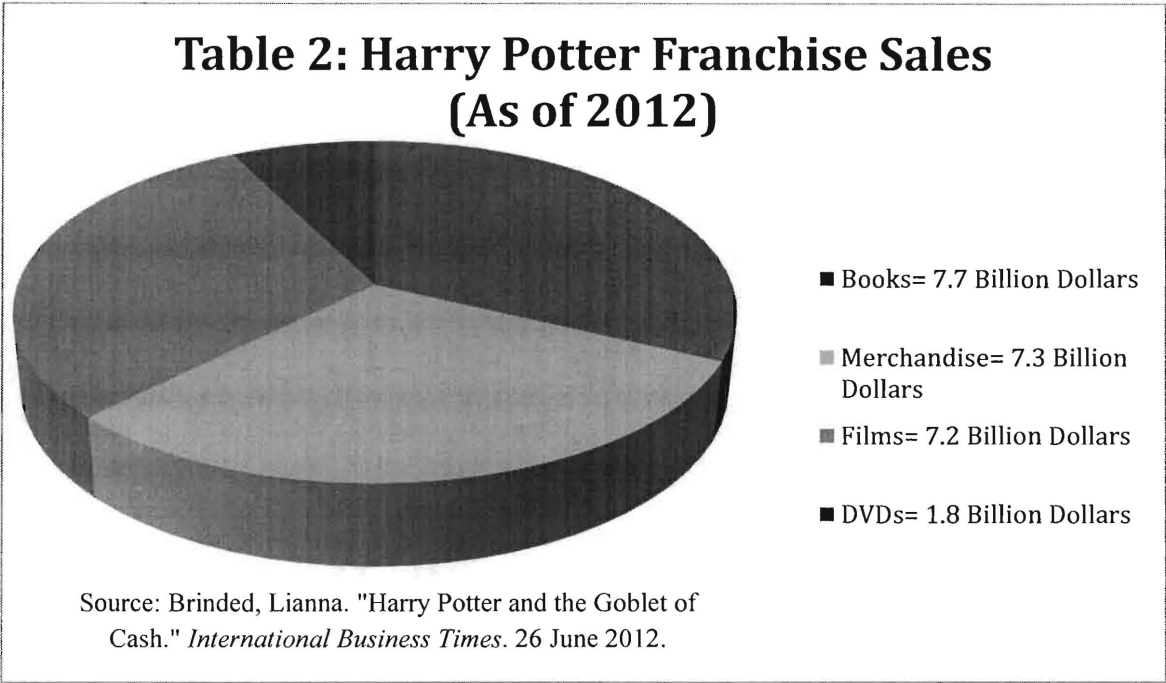
"This boy will be famous, a legend. There will be books written about Harry, every child in our world will know his name."
-Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone

The tale of *Harry Potter*'s success is well-known. If you yourself are not a *Harry Potter* fan, it is almost guaranteed that you know somebody who is one. The *Harry Potter* series is the best-selling book series in history, the film series is the highest grossing in history and *Forbes* has estimated J.K. Rowling to have a net worth of one billion dollars.²⁷ According to a study of Scholastic financial data and as presented in Table 2, the *Harry Potter* brand as a whole has generated almost \$25 billion as of 2012. Well over 450 million copies of the *Harry Potter* books have sold worldwide, generating \$7.7 billion in collective sales of the books, and continue to

²⁶ Gunelius, 160

²⁷ "The World's Billionaires." *Forbes*. 3 May 2008. Web. 02 Jan. 2013.
 <[http://www.forbes.com/lists/2008/10/billionaires08_Joanne-\(JK\)-Rowling_CRTT.html](http://www.forbes.com/lists/2008/10/billionaires08_Joanne-(JK)-Rowling_CRTT.html)>.

bring in about \$60 million a year. Movie tickets and DVD sales account for around \$10 billion alone and they also continue to grow.²⁸



However, statistics alone do not effectively capture the levels of fame that the *Harry Potter* brand has experienced over the years. Readers of the series were so fanatic and deeply loyal to the story that their fandom was deemed “Pottermania”. One early example of this mania occurred at a book signing for the release of the third book. Rowling and the bookstore employees were taken aback by the size of the crowds that attended. The bookstore owner stated, “Men and women and children were all delighted to get their copies signed. It's the nearest I've ever seen to Beatlemania with books”.²⁹ Events such as these early on in the series proved that this brand had reached levels of obsession that was unheard of in publishing. Even by this time, it was impossible for the publishers and bookstore owners to predict how much more manic the fans of this series would become in the following years.

²⁸ Brinded, Lianna. "Harry Potter and the Goblet of Cash." *International Business Times*. 26 June 2012. Web. 18 July 2012. <<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/articles/356466/20120626/harry-potter-jk-rowling-warner-bros-time.htm>>.

²⁹ McGinty

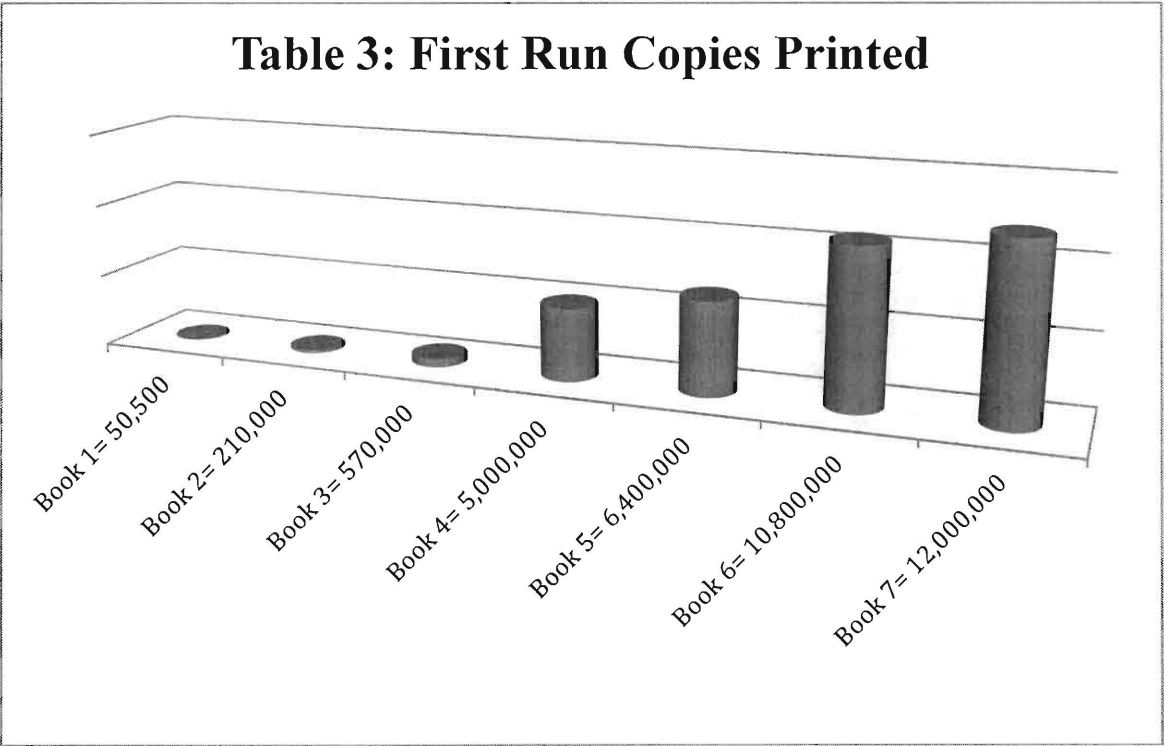
The crazed fans and their intense enthusiasm for the series resulted in some revolutionary changes in the industry from publishing to marketing and even to how children view reading. Countless stories arose of young people who found a new love of reading due to the *Harry Potter* series. A 2006 consumer trend tracker report in conjunction with Scholastic found that about half of *Harry Potter* readers aged five to seventeen said they did not read books before they started reading the series and now enjoyed reading. They also found that about 65 percent of *Harry Potter* readers said they had been doing better in school since they started reading the series.³⁰ In a period of time that technology was beginning to infiltrate people's lives on a whole new level, J.K. Rowling was able to transform an entire generation of children into screaming frenzied fans of books. Despite the lure of DVDs, video games, and the growing Internet, Rowling was able to get millions of adults of both genders and most astonishingly children to pick up and enjoy a book.

This shift in children's view of reading was not the only change Rowling brought about early on with the *Harry Potter* series. The books brought challenges to publishers and bookstores they had never encountered before. By the time Rowling had finished writing the third book of the series, the books were so popular that Bloomsbury deemed it necessary to set a timed release of the book. Rowling chose the time 3:45, when children would be released from school. The timed release created a stampede of fans to get their hands on the first copies of the book.³¹ This type of reaction to the release of a book was unheard of and bookstores were overwhelmed. The fans of *Harry Potter* continued to take publishers off guard with their levels of enthusiasm throughout the brand's existence and publishers were forced to adapt.

³⁰ Anelli, 159

³¹ Cowell, "Publishers Use Secrecy in Harry Potter Promotion."

The third book of the series, *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*, was the last to be released on separate days in the United Kingdom and the United States. The book was released two months earlier in the United Kingdom and thousands of frustrated and eager American readers flocked to British websites to buy the book online.³² After this fiasco, Bloomsbury and Scholastic began releasing the books on the same day at midnight. This new development led to the famous midnight release parties at bookstores and libraries where thousands of fans showed up in costumes in anticipation of the books' releases. The fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, was the first release to experience the midnight parties. As shown in Table 3, this was a very explosive time for the series with a record breaking five million first copies of the book being printed.



Further adaptations and changes to how the books would be released continued as the series went on, such as Rowling making appearances for each release. For the fourth book's

³² Cowell, "Publishers Use Secrecy in Harry Potter Promotion."

release, she rode the “Hogwarts Express”, a train from the books, for four days around England on a promotional tour. With the release of the sixth book, *Harry Potter and the Half Blood Prince*, the hysteria leading up to the release led Scholastic and Bloomsbury to take some extra security measures. Both publishers required bookstores to sign a legal document stating they would not open any boxes containing the books or sell any copies prior to the release date at midnight. By the time the last book was released, security had become so tight that Bloomsbury did not ship the books out to bookstores until the day before the release and even then they were shipped in crates bound with steel chains.³³ These types of events and precautions were revolutionary for publishers and everyone else involved with these releases.

The *Harry Potter* series had such a powerful effect in our publishing industry that it even changed the format of the famous *New York Times* Best Seller List. The status and incentives of being on the *New York Times* Best Seller List are very prestigious and widely beneficial. Publishers generally give bonuses to their Best Selling authors, bookstores set up special displays for them, and their status is often advertised with a sticker on the front of the book. Authors strive to get on this list because their Best Seller status often garners continued high book sales. By the time the third *Harry Potter* book was released in 1999, J.K. Rowling was hogging the *New York Times* Best Sellers List. The first three books in the series held the top three spots on the list in September of 1999, making Rowling the first author to have three titles on the list at the same time.³⁴ Rowling’s dominance of the list was unheard of, especially for a children’s author. As the release of the fourth book approached, the *New York Times* announced in June 2000 that it would be splitting its list into Best Sellers and Children’s Best Sellers.³⁵ This split

³³ Gunelius, 55

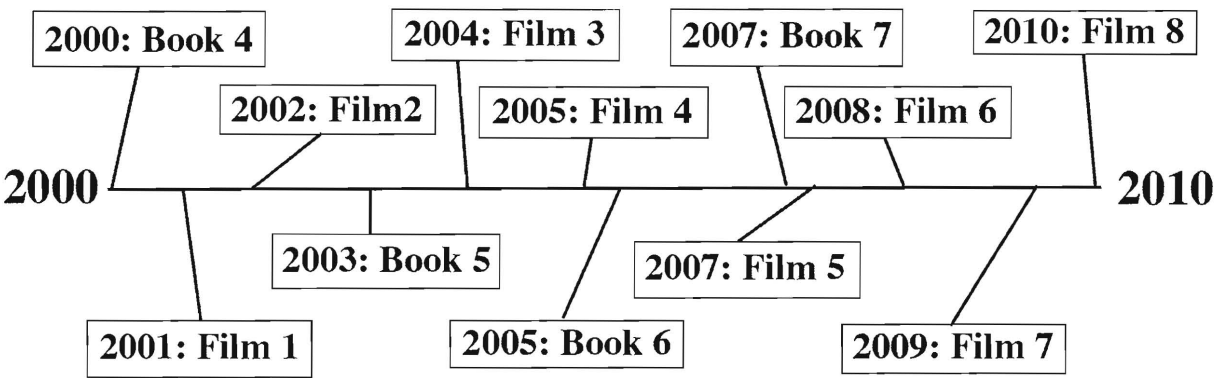
³⁴ McGinty

³⁵ Anelli, 74

would prevent Rowling from pitching camp in the top four spots. Children’s authors had been trying to get a separate list for years but it was not until *Harry Potter* that the *New York Times* Best Seller List was split in two.

By 2000, the first four books of the series had been published, the first movie was in the works, and three years would pass before the fifth book was released. It was during this time that eager fans flocked to the Internet to talk about *Harry Potter* and the brand was transformed from a publishing phenomenon to a cultural phenomenon. The brand’s fame and appeal exploded during these years as the excitement for the first film and the fifth book festered. Rowling and her marketers quickly realized how much excitement for the brand built in periods between releases and they thus adopted a new system of expertly timed releases for the rest of the series. As shown in Table 4, there was an almost clockwork like release schedule of the books and films that gave the phenomenon an endless feel so the fans would always have something to be anticipating and talking about. Fans were swept up in this whirlwind of “Pottermania” and were helplessly hooked.

**Table 4: Harry Potter Release Dates Timeline
(Since 2000)**



Source: Ross, Shmuel, and Mark Zurlo. "Harry Potter Timeline." Infoplease.

Shortly after the third book's release, *Harry Potter* marketers kept the buzz alive by announcing that Christopher Columbus had been chosen to direct the first film. While various magazines, newspapers, and fan sites were buzzing about the production of the first film; the fourth book, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, was released in July 2000. Sales for the fourth book massively surpassed the previous books as the brand had now entered an entirely new level of phenomenon. Immediately after the fourth's book release, the actors for the three leading roles for the first film were announced in August to maintain excitement for the film. This opening movie to the *Harry Potter* film series was being produced amidst one of the most explosive periods for the *Harry Potter* brand. There were those who feared the films would put an end to the reign of the book. Some worried that the films could never live up to the pre-imagined world of wizards that children had conjured up on their own. However, *Potter* fans went eagerly to the movies, loved them, and still went back to the books. Marketers had successfully harnessed and controlled buzz for the series through their timed releases. For the next decade, there was always a new *Harry Potter* book or a new *Harry Potter* film to anticipate and the reign of the brand was far from over.

When the first film opened in November 2001, it grossed \$90 million in the United States and £16 million in the United Kingdom, setting records in both countries. The success of the first film pushed the brand even further into the category of a cultural phenomenon as the series was now breaking both publishing and film records. It was during this time that the massive *Harry Potter* fan culture began emerging into the public eye. The first ever *Harry Potter* fan convention, Nimbus 2003, was held in Orlando in 2003.³⁶ This conference was the first time many of these fans expressed their love of *Potter* in a physical way, outside of their online lives on various fan sites or blog groups. Nimbus 2003 was the first of many *Harry Potter* conventions

³⁶ Anelli, 205

that continue to this day throughout the world. Fans dress in costumes, duel with fake wands in the hallways, hold art shows for fan art, discuss the books at panels, and even hold concerts of “wizard rock” bands.

“Wizard rock” is a genre of music that *Harry Potter* fans have created in order to produce music about the series. The first “wizard rock” band was *Harry and the Potters* who began making music based on the *Harry Potter* books in 2002. Since then, over 700 bands have followed in their footsteps of making *Harry Potter* inspired music. The bands are made up of fans of all ages and from different places all around the world. Some of these bands such as *Harry and the Potters*, *Draco and the Malfoys*, and *The Whomping Willows* have even reached very high levels of celebrity among the fandom, release studio albums of their music, and even go on tour. A number of *Harry Potter* podcasts have also emerged as a result of this massive fan culture. Two of the most famous *Harry Potter* fan sites, *Mugglenet* and *The Leaky Cauldron*, each started their own podcast in 2005. The first *Harry Potter* podcast, *MuggleCast*, hit the top five spots on the iTunes chart within the first week of its release.³⁷ It is clear that fans loved *Harry Potter* so much during this time that they were eager for more and more ways to discuss, experience, and celebrate the brand.

The books and films were not enough for millions of these fans’ enthusiasm so they created their own ways to extend the brand among themselves. The fandom even created its own sport in 2005 when a group of friends at Middlebury College decided to adapt the sport in the *Harry Potter* books called “Quidditch”. The adapted sport consists of players running— instead of flying— with broomsticks between their legs and using various soccer and kick balls instead of the fictional “quaffles” and “bludgers”. The sport began as a fun activity for a small group of

³⁷ Anelli, 280

friends but quickly became a very real and competitive sport for thousands of fans. An International Quidditch Association was founded for the organization of the sport in 2007 and there are currently over 1,000 teams registered from 13 different nations, mainly from the United States and Canada.³⁸ Fans have found countless ways to experience and expand the *Harry Potter* brand. They have held musicals based on the series, produced millions of pieces of fan fiction and fan art, and written books dedicated to dissecting plots and messages.

The team behind the marketing of *Harry Potter* recognized the massive levels of fandom that were emerging from the series very early on. While fans were creating their own ways to further experience the brand, marketers were also providing supplement experiences for them. J.K. Rowling has released various supplementary books to the series throughout the years whose profits were donated to charity such as two Hogwarts schoolbooks released in 2001. These two books titled *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* and *Quidditch Through the Ages* were widely successful because fans were so eager to get their hands on any supplementary information about the series provided by the author. Rowling managed to raise over £17 million for the Comic Relief Foundation, which benefits poor children around the world.³⁹

Supplementary experiences for the brand even extended to museums and amusement parks. Before the release of the sixth film in 2009, a *Harry Potter* exhibit opened in Chicago, Illinois' Museum of Science and Industry which featured props and artifacts from the films. The exhibit traveled to various cities around the world and made record-breaking sales in six of those cities.⁴⁰ In June 2010 the amusement park that had been rumored about for years, *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter*, opened in the Universal Orlando Resort in Florida. In March 2012

³⁸ Wells

³⁹ "Harry Potter Book Profits to Go to Comic Relief." *News*. Comic Relief, 16 July 2009. Web. 13 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.comicrelief.com/news/2009-07/harry-potter-book-profits-go-comic-relief>>.

⁴⁰ *JK Rowling Website*

Warner Brothers opened a Studio Tour at their London studio that allows fans to go behind the scenes of the films and tour the sets where the movies were shot. During the years that the *Harry Potter* brand was releasing its books and films, fans were constantly finding new ways to further experience the brand. Rowling and the marketers behind the brand have always found ways to assist fans with those extensions while carefully ensuring the brand never became over merchandised or saturated in the market. The brand could have ended when the last of the books and the films were released but it did not. *Harry Potter* brand creators and marketers have found ways to adapt and to seamlessly extend the brand into the current digital age and continue to break records and set industry precedence.

The Digital World of Harry Potter

"The stories we love best do live in us forever. So, whether you come back by page or by the big screen, Hogwarts will always be there to welcome you home."

-JK Rowling

The *Harry Potter* marketing team has been aware of the power of the Internet from very early on in the brand's existence. The thousands of fan sites that quickly emerged with the rise of the Internet allowed marketers to receive real time feedback on the brand in a two-way conversation that publishers and filmmakers of the past were never able to take advantage. When Warner Brothers launched the website for the first *Harry Potter* film in February 2001, 10,000 fans posted messages on its discussion boards within the first four days.⁴¹ When J.K. Rowling's personal website launched in early 2004, there were over 220 million hits within the first eight

⁴¹ Gunelius, 100

weeks.⁴² Immediately, the *Harry Potter* team recognized the power of the Internet to reach millions of *Harry Potter* fans. Rowling stated in an interview with a *Harry Potter* podcast that she “enjoyed the website so much. It’s been a great way to communicate with fans. And the most effective way I could have found”.⁴³ It is clear that the *Harry Potter* brand, its creators, and its fans have all greatly benefited from the utilization of the Internet to share, promote, and discuss the series. So when Rowling’s empire of books and movies had seemed to conclude with the release of the last book and film and marketers needed to find a way to make the series new again, they turned to the Internet to do so.

Today, the first readers of *Harry Potter* are old enough to have children of their own. Marketers quickly realized they needed to find a way to make the series new for young readers again in order to maintain relevance in the market. Their solution to this obstacle was the development and launch of the new interactive online reading experience *Pottermore*. This new site includes a chapter-by-chapter interactive re-telling of the books but also includes new material that Rowling has never before shared. The *Harry Potter* team knew that *Pottermore* would be successful because the massive groups of *Harry Potter* fans were so desperate for more material. Using the same tease marketing utilized for the books and the films over the past fifteen years, Rowling began to slowly announce in 2011 that something more was to come for her fans. One journalist has described this announcement as “the perfect 21st century marketing campaign”.⁴⁴

⁴² Gunelius, 101

⁴³ Rowling, J. K. "The One with JK Rowling." Interview by Melissa Anelli, John Noe, and Sue Upton. Audio blog post. *PotterCast*. The Leaky Cauldron, 18 Dec. 2007. Web. 18 June 2012. <<http://www.the-leaky-cauldron.org/pottercast/?p=897>>.

⁴⁴ Jordison, Sam. "Pottermore Gives Away JK Rowling's Marketing Genius." Web log post. *Books Blog*. The Guardian, 23 June 2011. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/booksblog/2011/jun/23/pottermore-jk-rowling-marketing-genius-harry-potter>>.

First, marketers released a teaser on the Internet that led fans to a webpage that simply read “Coming Soon”. The page attracted hundreds of thousands of followers within hours of its launch. Over the next few weeks, millions of fans were directed to this “corner of the web, where their email addresses were collected and their sense of anticipation and excitement built”.⁴⁵

Soon, various clues began appearing on fan sites. A publicist for Scholastic stated that,

*The clues came in the form of geographical coordinates. The coordinates, when entered into a site called Secret Street View, corresponded with 10 locations, including Salem Massachusetts, King’s Cross Station in London, and New Orleans. Each street view page was superimposed with a letter, which, as the fans decoded, eventually spelled out ‘more Potter’—or, as it turned out, Pottermore.*⁴⁶

The anticipation that resulted from this unique marketing campaign led to huge levels of attention for the new site.

Pottermore is a revolutionary type of reading experience online. The *Harry Potter* team viewed this emerging digital age as an opportunity to re-format the series. “Rowling understands that the web is not just a place to replicate the printed page, but allows for a spell-binding level of interactivity which could reinvigorate people’s (and especially children’s) passion for reading”.⁴⁷ Partnered by Sony, Rowling developed the site to create a place for fans to engage in an online reading experience that coincided with the books. A beta release of the site began in July 2011 and was opened to the public in April 2012. Not only does the site features a chapter by chapter summary of the series complete with attractive illustrations and Flash graphics, but

⁴⁵ Jordison

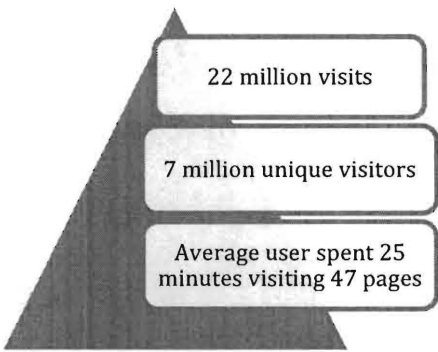
⁴⁶ Witt, Emily. “Harry Potter and the Interactive Digital Environment.” *The New York Observer*. 2 Aug. 2011. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://observer.com/2011/08/harry-potter-and-the-interactive-digital-environment/>>.

⁴⁷ Solon, Olivia. “JK Rowling Reignites DRM Debate.” *Olivia Solon’s Blog*. Wired UK, 23 June 2011. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2011-06/23/harry-potter-e-books-drm>>.

there are also various games, quizzes, and activities. These features give an all new interactivity to the series that the books and movies could never have provided. Fans can now be sorted into one of the Hogwarts houses, they can go shopping for a wand or an owl, and they can even make potions and duel each other with wizard spells.

Fans are invited to engage in an interactivity that is brand new for the series. Even more attractive, they are also promised over 18,000 words of additional material that was never in the original seven books. Rowling learned very early on from her website and her supplementary *Harry Potter* books that fans loved reading new material about the *Harry Potter* world. Fandoms use the term “canon” to describe official information about the fictional universe that is provided by the creator, and *Harry Potter* fans cannot get enough of it. Scattered throughout the chapter by chapter summaries of *Pottermore*, Rowling includes pages of new material that expands on various characters’ backgrounds, settings, and other information about the world she has created. As shown in Table 5, the site has naturally attracted millions of eager *Harry Potter* fans and has lived up to the level of quality that those fans have come to expect from the brand. *Pottermore* has not only attracted new fans, but has also re-submerged millions of old fans in the discussion of new canon.

Table 5: First Two Weeks of Pottermore Statistics



Source: Jones, Philip. "Pottermore E-book Store Sells '£3m in First Month'" *News. The Bookseller*, 4 May 2012.

On the surface, *Pottermore* is an online reading experience that offers fans new information about the characters and the world in whom they are deeply devoted. Underneath that surface however, *Pottermore* is essentially a platform to sell even more products to fans such as the *Harry Potter* e-books and audio books. Rowling has successfully managed to present the whole project as an act of altruism. While the site is fundamentally a marketing ploy to continue to sell the same product to the same people, fans are OK with it, even happy about it, due to the way Rowling has presented and executed the project. She has stated, "I wanted to give something back to the fans that have followed Harry so devotedly over the years, and to bring the stories to a new generation".⁴⁸ Rowling released a video in anticipation of the site's launch in which she is sitting on a white couch in a brightly lit room as she explains what *Pottermore* will be. Millions of fans were immediately sold.

It is doubtful that there is any *Harry Potter* devotee that wasn't just a little curious about what Rowling had to say about Professor McGonagall's love life as a young witch or how Mr. and Mrs. Dursley met. "And what Potter fan wouldn't want to answer a Rowling-devised questionnaire to sort them into the relevant wizarding house, or go through the process of finding the right wand?"⁴⁹ Any information released about the series by J.K. Rowling is sure to sell in any format whatsoever because the fans are so eager for any new material they can get their hands on. *Harry Potter* marketers have essentially harnessed that eagerness to corral millions of fans onto a site that sells a new range of products which cost them next to nothing to produce and will make them millions.

Unlike the majority of other e-books currently on the market, the *Harry Potter* e-books are sold exclusively on the *Pottermore* site direct from the author herself. Rowling is one of the

⁴⁸ Jordison

⁴⁹ Jordison

first authors to drop digital rights management (DRM) from her e-books. The DRM exists to prevent users from pirating the material. Waiving the DRM essentially means that the e-books can be read on any device. Currently, Amazon and Apple have each restricted their e-book files so that they can only be read on the Kindle and the iPad respectively. In contrast, Rowling has neatly sidestepped the middleman of online sellers such as Amazon, iTunes, or Google. She has been able to “maintain complete control over pricing, scoop up nearly all the profits from royalties, and keep all the sales information and the further marketing opportunities that offers to herself”, instead of having to share that information with a seller.⁵⁰ In dropping the DRM from her e-books, Rowling is showing that she trusts her fans not to pirate her work instead of assuming that they will. Following in Rowling’s footsteps, the world’s biggest science fiction publishing house, Tor, became the first publisher to drop DRM from its e-books.⁵¹ The *Harry Potter* brand has been breaking records and making changes to the industry for years, and now Rowling’s decisions about her series entering the digital world are creating some revolutionary changes for digital publishing as well.

Authors generally get less than ten percent of royalties from printed book sales and anywhere between 20 and 40 percent from e-books. If they self-publish through the likes of Amazon, they can get as much as 70 percent of revenues, with the remainder going to the e-book store. In completely dropping DRM on her e-books and selling them herself exclusively through *Pottermore*, Rowling stands to make nearly 100% of the sales.⁵² As the series is once again renewing its relevance in the market, *Pottermore* has created a new interest in the *Harry Potter*

⁵⁰ Jordison

⁵¹ Flood, Alison. "Tor Rips up the Rulebook on Digital Rights Management." *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 26 Apr. 2012. Web. 15 June 2012. <<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2012/apr/26/tor-rips-rulebook-digital-rights-management>>.

⁵² Flood

printed books as well with the book sales rising once again. Pottermore CEO Charlie Redmayne stated in an interview that “There were fears piracy would increase as a result of being DRM-free, and that sales of the e-books would cannibalize sales of the physical titles, but we were delighted to see sales of the physical books go up, and piracy come down”.⁵³

J.K. Rowling has consistently made good decisions about maintaining her brand’s integrity over the years. Her actions and decisions about her series entering the digital world were not different from her decisions about it entering the movie screen or merchandising deals. As a result of her bold decisions, Rowling has been able to completely maintain the rights to her properties, a goal that has always been principally important to her. Ever since the first merchandising deal or the first talks of a film adaptation, Rowling has been meticulous about maintaining the brand’s integrity. She has become so inclined to maintain that integrity over the years that she now has the opportunity to take that same brand and re-sell it to millions of old and new fans in an entirely new and exciting format.

Conclusion

“I’m not saying I believe magic is real- I don’t. But that’s the perennial appeal of magic- the idea that we ourselves have power and we can shape our world.”

-JK Rowling

The science of marketing and advertising an entertainment brand is very delicate and complex. To achieve success, the brand must have a perfect recipe of inherent quality and just the right amount of merchandising and advertising. In examining the marketing and branding of

⁵³ Jones, Philip. "Pottermore E-book Store Sells '£3m in First Month'" *News*. The Bookseller, 4 May 2012. Web. 13 Mar. 2013. <<http://www.thebookseller.com/news/pottermore-e-book-store-sells-£3m-first-month.html>>.

the *Harry Potter* series, it is clear that the brand's continued success is largely due to J.K. Rowling herself. While the stage was perfectly set for the series at its inception, Rowling's decision to serve as a strict brand guardian over the years and her ability to maintain loyalty to her fans are what aided the brand most. Rowling had an intriguing manuscript and a heart wrenching rags to riches life story that catapulted her and her series into the spotlight. As people began to fall in love with the *Harry Potter* series, the word of mouth buzz surrounding the books exploded and was exceptionally aided by rise of the Internet.

As the series quickly become a cultural phenomenon, Rowling always preferred a positive and accurate brand image and message over profits. At a time when she could have easily handed artistic rights over to any film studio to adapt the books into film, she carefully chose a studio that she knew would stay true to the story and she played a significant role in the films' conceptions. Rowling was also very stern about limiting brand extensions such as merchandising deals in order to avoid over saturation of the brand in the market. As a result, fans' loyalty and love for the series rarely waned, the clockwork like release of the books and films always gave them something to talk about, and they were consistently left wanting more.

The levels of success that the *Harry Potter* brand has come to enjoy coupled with the many changes it has inflicted on our entertainment industry has made the series a breakthrough brand. The series was initially turned down by many publishers and is now one of the most recognizable entertainment brands in the world. The lasting effects that *Harry Potter* has left in its wake vary from publishing to film and to marketing in general. The crazed "Pottermania" of fans created challenges for bookstores and publishers that they had never encountered. As the *Harry Potter* series enters the digital age, the brand continues to take groundbreaking actions. The new interactive reading experience of *Pottermore* is the ideal solution to re-formatting the

brand for a new youth audience and to stay relevant in the market while creating a platform for selling e-books all at the same time. The lucrative results of Rowling's abandonment of DRM in her e-books have also led other publishers to consider following in her footsteps.

J.K. Rowling has always been somewhat of a maverick in her decisions regarding her series. From maintaining brand integrity in merchandising fifteen years ago all the way to maintaining the rights to digital publishing, Rowling has always served as a firm and meticulous *Harry Potter* brand guardian. People may not have understood her actions at the time, but the results of those stern decisions are now clear. The brand has soared to vast levels of success and influence and stands to continue that success even after the series has ended. This brand clearly serves as a valuable example of marketing, adaptation, and brand loyalty in our current and future media industry.

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